

remembered for her invaluable contributions in the labor arena, having served as labor liaison for former King County Executive Gary Locke and as Transit's primary negotiator on several ATU 587 labor contracts.

Thankfully, Mary has not departed the scene and I can still rely upon her presence in the DOT, where she will continue to exert the same dynamic style as she did in Transit for nearly three decades – and I do mean dynamic! We can look forward to seeing Mary in the halls and still hearing her familiar greeting of “Hello there!” I encourage you to express appreciation to her for all that she has given to Transit over the years.

Mary's decision to leave Transit gave me an opportunity to make an organizational structure change and create a new position

– deputy general manager for System Development – to lead that new effort. Jim Jacobson has been appointed to fill this important new role.



Jim Jacobson



Mary Peterson

in transportation consulting. Jim's King County Metro career spans long-range and near-term systems planning, and for the last 12 years he has served as manager of the Transit Service Development Section.

In addition to overseeing the development of a series of six-year transit plans and related services, Jim has been involved in delicate negotiations and planning activities with Sound Transit. The latter includes a recent renegotiation of the agreement with Sound Transit on

the future role, ownership and operation of the bus tunnel.

The scope (and name) of the new deputy general manager position is different from the one previously held by Mary Peterson. The new position reflects the new organization and includes directing all activities associated with the planning and construction of the King County Metro system. Accordingly, all of the following now fall under Jim's direction: the Service Development Section, Design and Construction Section and the growing work associated with major capital projects, such as the Base Expansion Program, Sound Transit, Interstate 405 and other programs. In addition, Jim will address functions performed under Mary, including overseeing Transit's budget, human resources, safety and security activities. Please welcome and congratulate Jim in his new role.

I look forward to the opportunities that the Transit organization presents for all of us in meeting the needs of the community, and to doing it together with you. Thanks.

– Rick Walsh, GM

Operator of the Year

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record. To receive the award, a driver must be chosen as Operator of the Month from one of the seven transit bases. At the end of the year, the Operator of the Year is selected by a vote of fellow Operators of the Month.

Wade has been Operator of the Month multiple times in his career, and he has dozens of commendations from passengers.

“Johnny is an incredible role model for all our operators,” said Curtis Robinson, Metro's operations manager. “He's a skilled driver and a caring, compassionate person who is always looking out for his passengers and co-workers.”

Low-floor bus fleet will be a first for Metro

Stepless doorways will allow all passengers to board and descend more easily.

King County is poised to order 100 40-foot low-floor diesel buses – Metro Transit's first fleet order of the low-floor model. The contract award to New Flyer of America to build 100 of the D40LF model is pending successful completion of the mandatory Buy America pre-award audit.

Transit General Manager Rick Walsh made the decision to purchase the D40LF model based on a recommendation of the Bus Procurement Team, a Metro Transit employee group that actively participates in all phases of bus procurement. The team had ranked the three submitted proposals in this order: New Flyer Invero, New Flyer D40LF, and Gillig 40-ft low floor.

In making his decision, Walsh acknowledged that the team's first choice, Invero, is an exciting new design. However, the model has no experience in revenue service and it is not yet competitively priced, he added.

What can operators, mechanics and the public expect of the new buses? The two principal advantages of low-floor buses are the no-step entry and the use of a ramp, instead of a lift, to load mobility aid devices. The stepless doorways will allow all passengers to board and descend more easily. At the front door, a ramp can be rotated out to bridge the gap between sidewalk and bus and to allow easier boarding of wheelchairs and other mobility aid devices. In another first for Metro, the fleet also features air-conditioning.

Outside, the New Flyer buses will feature Metro's current paint scheme, with minor adaptations to fit this particular bus. The fleet will feature Luminator LED destination signs, as introduced on the Gillig trolley buses. Inside, passengers will see Metro's standard interior colors and seats.

The benefits of low-floor buses come at the price of fewer seats, as there are no seats on the front wheelhouses. As a result, each bus will offer 35 seats, down from the 42 in the 40-foot Gillig model.

Mechanically, this fleet will feature a Cummins ISL 280 hp diesel engine that meets the more stringent 2002 EPA emission standards. This engine will be teamed with a Voith four-speed transmission, driving through a MAN axle.

A prototype could be delivered as soon as December of this year, with production buses scheduled for delivery in fall of 2003. This fleet will replace the 83 remaining 1986-87 MAN 40-foot buses.

In Transit online!

Current and past issues of *In Transit* are available on the King County intranet at dot.metrokc.gov/transit/intransit/ and on the Internet at www.metrokc.gov/kcldot/aboutus/intransit/.

This publication is available in alternative formats on request at (206) 263-3703 (voice) or (206) 684-1682 (TTY).



In Transit
June-July
2002
A Newsletter for King County Metro Transit Employees

From the General Manager's Desk

Transit puts on a new face

As May began, we had already started to put a new face on the Division, literally and figuratively. We'd created a new deputy general manager position, staffed it and launched a new organizational structure. Before commenting on the latter, I want to first acknowledge Mary Peterson, one of Transit's true stars, who became deputy director for the Department of Transportation.

Mary Peterson's influence on Transit's customer services, customer relations and human resource areas will prove legendary in time, if they aren't already so. In addition, Mary deftly influenced and guided us through the challenging period when the former Metro organization was merging with King County government. Mary will also be

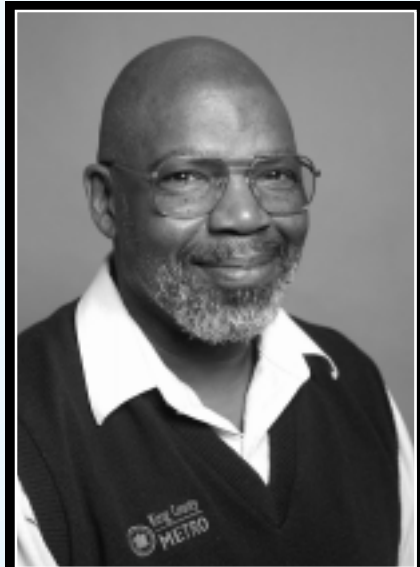
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'Metro Original' Wade 2001 Top Operator

For more than 32 years, transit operator Johnny Wade has had one mission: giving his passengers the best ride possible. King County Metro recognized Wade's dedication May 17, naming him Bus Operator of the Year for 2001 in ceremonies near South Bus Base, where he is assigned.

Wade is such a veteran that some of the rookies he trained behind the wheel are now Metro's top managers, including General Manager Rick Walsh.



Operator of the Year for 2001
Johnny Wade

“Johnny is a Metro original,” Walsh said. “He trained me back in the 1970s, when I first started as a driver. He even pre-dates the organization, since he was one of the Seattle Transit drivers absorbed into the agency when Metro was started in 1973.”

Wade has been driving Metro buses for almost 32 years and has a 20-year safe driving record. He currently drives the express route Metro operates for Sound Transit between Bellevue and Federal Way (ST Express #565).

“Johnny is an outstanding driver,” said his base Supervisor Pete DeLeyser. “Twice he tried supervision and both times he decided to return to driving, because he loves people and missed the everyday interaction with his passengers.”

Wade is known for his involvement in Metro committees and activities. He

participates in role playing for the supervisor hiring process and over the years has belonged to Metro's Bowling League, Motorcycle Club and Credit Union board. He now serves on the Transit Safety Accident Review Board.

A Boulevard Park resident, Wade and his wife Dorothy, a retired transit operator, have been married for more than 30 years. They have seven children, including a set of twin boys who still live at home. He enjoys travel, watching movies and playing with his grandchildren.

The Operator of the Year award honors operators who demonstrate safe driving skills, exceptional customer service and an outstanding overall work

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Reggie Wilson

‘Singing bus driver’ brings positive media focus to Metro

In just a few short months, Reggie Wilson has become a media celebrity as one of Metro’s outstanding operators.

It all started at the February shake-up, when Wilson jokingly told his passengers he was moving away. Heartbroken to be losing their beloved driver, some of the passengers called the Seattle Times to praise the man who filled their morning commute with songs and jokes.

The Times story ended up on the front page, catching the attention of readers and other media outlets. Since then, Wilson has been featured on KOMO Television; been a call-in guest on a Portland radio station; spoken to high school students about job satisfaction; and starred in a motivational video about getting the most out of your career.

Wilson’s exposure has been good for Metro and for other operators. When the video producer came to Ryerson Base, he decided to include half a dozen other operators as examples of people who enjoy their work as much as Wilson.

“Reggie is not unique,” said Jim O’Rourke, supervisor at Ryerson. “We have a lot of drivers who have found very positive ways to approach their job. Those drivers bring in fewer complaints and more commendations – which is good for everyone at Metro Transit.”

Wilson’s 15 minutes of fame might not be over yet. CNN has also contacted Metro about doing a national news story on “the singing bus driver.”

New Overlake Transit Center taking shape

Progress continues on construction at the new Overlake Transit Center at Northeast 40th Street. While transit service began at the transit center with the February service change, parking areas became available in April.

Designed to provide a focal point for transit service in the Overlake/Redmond area, the transit center will eventually consist of:

- bus loop with capacity for up to six in-service coaches and four layover coaches;
- a loading loop for private shuttle services and a building to house the private shuttle operations;
- a building with space for a bike station, the Greater Redmond

Transportation Management Association (GRTMA), Redmond police and transit operator comfort stations; and ■ parking for approximately 209 passenger vehicles.

Though the bus loop and parking areas are nearly complete, work continues on the shuttle operations building. Construction of the bike station/ GRTMA/police/operator comfort station building is expected to begin later this year and be complete in 2003.

In addition to the transit center, immediately adjacent to the site are two bus stops on 156th Avenue Northeast and freeway flyer stops on the Northeast 40th Street Interchange.

The transit center will also feature artwork by project artist

Karen Guzak. A large compass design is taking shape in the plaza area on the passenger-loading platform. Variations on the patterns and shapes found in the plaza compass design are incorporated into other items as well, including glass window panels, light poles, tree grates and entry gates.

The transit center is a joint effort involving King County, Sound Transit, the City of Redmond and Microsoft Corporation. It will provide access to and convenient transfers between regional and local transit services. Ten routes provide transit service at or immediately adjacent to the transit center, including King County Metro Routes 222, 225, 229, 230, 232, 245, 247, 256, 268, 269 and Sound Transit Route 545.

Gridlock solutions in voters’ hands?

The 2002 Washington State Legislature passed two bills that could provide significant new revenue sources to fund public transit improvements statewide and in King County, potentially bringing some relief to transportation gridlock. The ultimate outcome soon will be in the hands of the voting public.

One bill passed by the Legislature authorized a statewide referendum that could raise about \$8.1 billion over 10 years. It would largely fund highway improvements through a nine-cents-per-gallon increase in the state gas tax. This “statewide package” will be on the November 2002 ballot.

A second bill authorizes Puget Sound-area voters to raise

Improvement District (RTID) made up of King, Pierce and/or Snohomish Counties. The regional package of transportation projects would be independent of the statewide package and would be financed through a combination of increased sales taxes, car licensing fees and a truck weight fees-motor vehicle excise tax, potentially generating another \$8.7 billion over 10 years.

“Regional package” funds would most likely have to be spent on a combination of so-called “mega-highway projects.” These include a major expansion of I-405 on the



additional money to fund specific transportation projects within Pierce, King and Snohomish counties – the so-called “regional package” – through a new Regional Transportation

Eastside, expansion of SR-520 across Lake Washington and the replacement of the Alaskan Way Viaduct in Seattle, and public-transit capital projects such as buying buses or building park-

and-ride lots. A number of smaller road projects would also be included. The new RTID’s Board of Directors – a board made up of county councilmembers from the participating counties – would select the projects.

Efforts are now under way to define a regional package and place it on the November ballot

‘The regional package could generate up to \$7.4 billion in King County alone.’

Matt Sheldon
Transit Planner

along with the statewide package. According to Jim Jacobson, King County Metro Transit’s deputy general manager of System Development, “In order to make the November ballot, participating counties must agree by mid-summer on which

specific projects to include in the regional package and the cost estimates of those projects. It will be a challenge, but I am confident a well-considered package will be ready in time for voter consideration.”

Public transit funding could be expanded even more because state legislation also permits remaining unused Sound Transit sales tax and motor vehicle excise taxing authorities to be combined with the new taxes. Sound Transit would have to cede its taxing authority to the RTID for these purposes, however, and Sound Transit taxes would then be levied throughout the RTID area, rather than just within Sound Transit’s currently defined taxing area.

The inclusion of Sound Transit’s latent taxing authority would generate additional funds to pay for major transit investments that the regional package would not fund, such as extending light-rail services to Northgate and

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Waterfront Streetcar now ‘The Benson Line’

King County celebrated the 20th anniversary of Metro Transit’s historic Waterfront Streetcar with a special moment on June 1. During ceremonies in Pioneer Square, King County Executive Ron Sims surprised former Seattle City Councilmember George Benson by officially designating the streetcar line as the “George Benson Waterfront Streetcar Line.”

As a city councilmember from 1974 to 1993, and a member of the old Metro Council, Benson took the lead on ensuring countywide bus service, construction of the Downtown Seattle Bus Tunnel and preservation of the Monorail. He initiated Sunday bus service connecting Seattle’s major parks, Pioneer Square and the Ship Canal Locks. He negotiated the agreement with the Urban Mass Transit Administration to rebuild and expand Metro’s



Former Seattle City Councilmember George Benson

electric trolley system in Seattle. In recognition of his legacy, he was inducted into the Hall of Fame of the American Public Transit Association in 1997.

But of all his projects, Metro’s Waterfront Streetcar is most closely associated with Benson. It began with his dream to reinstate the historic streetcar line. With single-minded dedication, Benson tracked down authentic W2 Class streetcars in Melbourne, Australia, and bought them for \$5,000 each. He recruited hundreds of volunteers to restore and transport them across the Pacific Ocean. When obstacles were encountered, Benson

kept everyone on track and never let the project become derailed.

Benson has been universally proclaimed as the “Father of the Waterfront Streetcar,” and now passengers will know what an important role he played in Metro’s transportation history.

Sea-Tac International Airport or adding freeway bus rapid-transit service to I-405. The challenge of solving area transportation problems is so great that voters may also be asked to approve, as part of the same “regional package” ballot measure, the use of the remaining one-tenth-of-one-cent local sales tax authority that King County does not yet levy.

Matt Sheldon, a transit planner working to help define the regional package, notes, “If all of these potential tax increases

were approved, the regional package could generate up to \$7.4 billion over 10 years in King County alone.” Currently, KCDOT staff members are working to define additional King County public transit projects that could be included in the regional package, such as:

- buying buses to allow Metro Transit to expand services under its Six-Year Plan;
- implementing arterial bus rapid-transit service in major ridership corridors, such as Aurora Avenue or Pacific

Highway South;

- making spot improvements to fix major freeway transit “choke points”; and
- expanding transportation demand management and vanpooling programs to reach broader markets.

A full list of potential projects recently recommended by the county executives of King, Pierce and Snohomish counties is available on the King County web site at <http://www.metrokc.gov/exec/news/2002/050202.htm>.